2012

Service-Learning in English Language Courses

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Division of Community Engagement

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Service-Learning in English Language Courses

Keywords
service-learning, english, language, higher education, college, english as a second language, community, community engagement

Disciplines
Higher Education

Comments
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Service Learning in English Language Courses

Audrey Short, Susan Dudley, & Lynn E. Pelco

Virginia Commonwealth University
College English Association 2012: Borders
Richmond, VA
March 30, 2012
Agenda

• What we do and why we do it

• Incorporation of writing

• Preliminary evaluation data

• Benefits and challenges
Community Engagement & International Students in Higher Education

• Service-learning as a high impact educational practice (Kuh, 2008)
  – Service-learning at VCU refers to an academic class in which students (a) engage in 20 hrs of community service that relates to the class content and (b) reflect on how the community service enhances what they are learning.

• International university students engaging in the community (Reyes, 2009)

• International students doing service-learning (Pirani-Mellstrom & Berson, 2008)
VCU’s Co-Curricular Community Engagement Initiatives for International Students

- Hands On Greater Richmond Day
- Stop Hunger Now
- The Giving Heart Thanksgiving Feast
Lifelong Learning

• Adult age 50 & "better"
• Educational & social needs (history, music, dance, fitness, etc.)
• 1.5 hours per meeting
• 5 consecutive weekly meetings
• Educational Presentations
  – Country Introduction
  – Communication
  – Holidays
  – Arts
  – Food
Richmond Public Library

- Open to the public (homeschooled and private school families, retired adults, etc)
- 1 to 1.5 hours per meeting
- 3 to 4 consecutive weekly meetings
- Educational Presentations
Lobs and Lessons

• Elementary & middle school students from 8 community partners.
• Life skills (get along with others, regulate emotions, appreciate diversity, etc.), exposure to college, tennis
• 2 hours per meeting
• 4 to 5 consecutive weekly meetings (except Spring Break)
• Diversity education (posters, crafts, stories); help with homework; tennis
Small group and one-on-one conversations
Service-Learning Multiple Ways

International Students as Recipients of Service

Recipients of Service:
♦ Graduate students in MA of Gerontology, VCU, Medical Campus
  ◊ **Presentations & discussions**
♦ Undergraduate classes: Global ethics/religion, theater, and freshman English
  ◊ **In & out of class conversation partners**
Writing Opportunities

• Reflections
• Essays
• Storytelling
• Tour brochures
• FAQ sheets
Reflections by Students & Teacher

♦ What? So What? Now What?

♦ Tumblr blog (following each other on blogs)

♦ Options: Written, Audio, Video

♦ Thank you letters
What? So What? Now What?

1. WHAT?
   A. What happened? What did you talk about? What did your conversation partner(s) say?
   B. What did you observe that was different from a previous experience?

2. SO WHAT?
   A. How would you assess, judge, or evaluate what happened or what you learned? Why do you think the people involved acted the way they did or said the things they said? How else could you have interpreted the situation, actions, or words?
   B. How did you feel about what you observed? What makes you feel this way?
   C. What did you learn about yourself through this experience?
   D. How did your conversation partners communicate? How is this communication style different and/or the same as communication styles you are familiar with, including your own?
   E. What connection(s) can you make between what was studied for class and your community-based experience?
   F. What connection can you make between your personal beliefs and experiences and the community-based experiences?

3. NOW WHAT?
   A. How will you be able to use the skills practiced with the community partner in your academic classes and/or the workplace? Skills may be related to but are not limited to teamwork, communication, leadership, problem solving, self-management and self-motivation, work ethic and computers.
   B. What can you specifically do differently next time to have a better experience? What are some examples of specific strategies or techniques that could be used? Write 3 specific steps that can be measured.
   C. What other areas would you like to further develop and what specifically can you do to develop them?
Reflections
Essays

- Rhetorical styles
  - Cause/Effect, Expository, Argumentative, Compare/Contrast

- Sample topics
  - Elderly
    - Retirement; Ageism; Encore careers; Myths and stereotypes
  - Children
    - Educational access, funding inequality; Multiple intelligences
  - Public service institutions
    - Demographics; Services provided; Funding

- Plagiarism
Storytelling

• Possible topics
  – Folktales/fairly tales/fables
  – Historical figures/events

• Adaptations
  • Changing the events
  • Adding an ending
  • Providing supplemental information

• Creative Writing

• Format
  – Graphic novel
  – Picture book
Tour Brochures & FAQ Sheets

Local places of interests for new students

– Community engagement opportunities
Evaluation Tools

• Reflections by students and teacher
• Pre and post service learning survey for students
• Classroom observation coding sheet
• Community partner interview
Pre- & Post- Service-Learning Survey for Students

Section 1: Demographics

Section 2: Social Justice Continuum

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Section 3: Community Responsibility

A. Being involved in a program to improve my community is important.

E. The government or community should not be responsible for helping people with social problems.

Section 4: Skills and Competencies

Civic Engagement, Problem Solving, Leadership, Other Academic Skills
# Classroom Observation Coding Sheet

**Code Definitions:**
- **PNV** = Positive Nonverbal Behavior
- **NNV** = Negative Nonverbal Behavior
- **VER** = Verbalizing
- **Q** = Quiet

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<th>Student 2</th>
<th>Student 2</th>
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<td>PNV  NNV  V  Q</td>
<td>PNV  NNV  V  Q</td>
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Community Partner Interview

Conducted by a familiar third party midway through service

1. What are the main needs of your clients?

2. How have the international students met (or not met) those needs?

3. How has communication been between your organization and the course instructor?

4. What kind of feedback have you heard from your members? (Can you give any specific examples?)

5. Do you have any suggestions for us regarding how to improve what we do?

6. Other comments?
Benefits

• Provide opportunities to connect with other university departments and the local community

• Facilitate dialogue among students about social issues that affect the community

• Motivate student learning through an authentic environment

• Develop a deeper understanding of course material through experiential learning

• Encourage students to become engaged citizens
Challenges

• Develop community relationships
  – Match academic goals with appropriate tasks both for students and community partners
  – Communicate effectively
  – Follow through
  – Handle logistics
    • Bureaucracy (background check requirement, health screenings, immigration regulations, etc.)
    • Time scheduling
    • Time commitment
    • Transportation issues

• Provide quality services
  – Ensure students are prepared
    • How to understand audience
    • How to talk to different kinds of people
    • How to take on leadership roles
    • How to communicate responsibly
    • How to organize their time with partners
  – Be flexible
Contact Us

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